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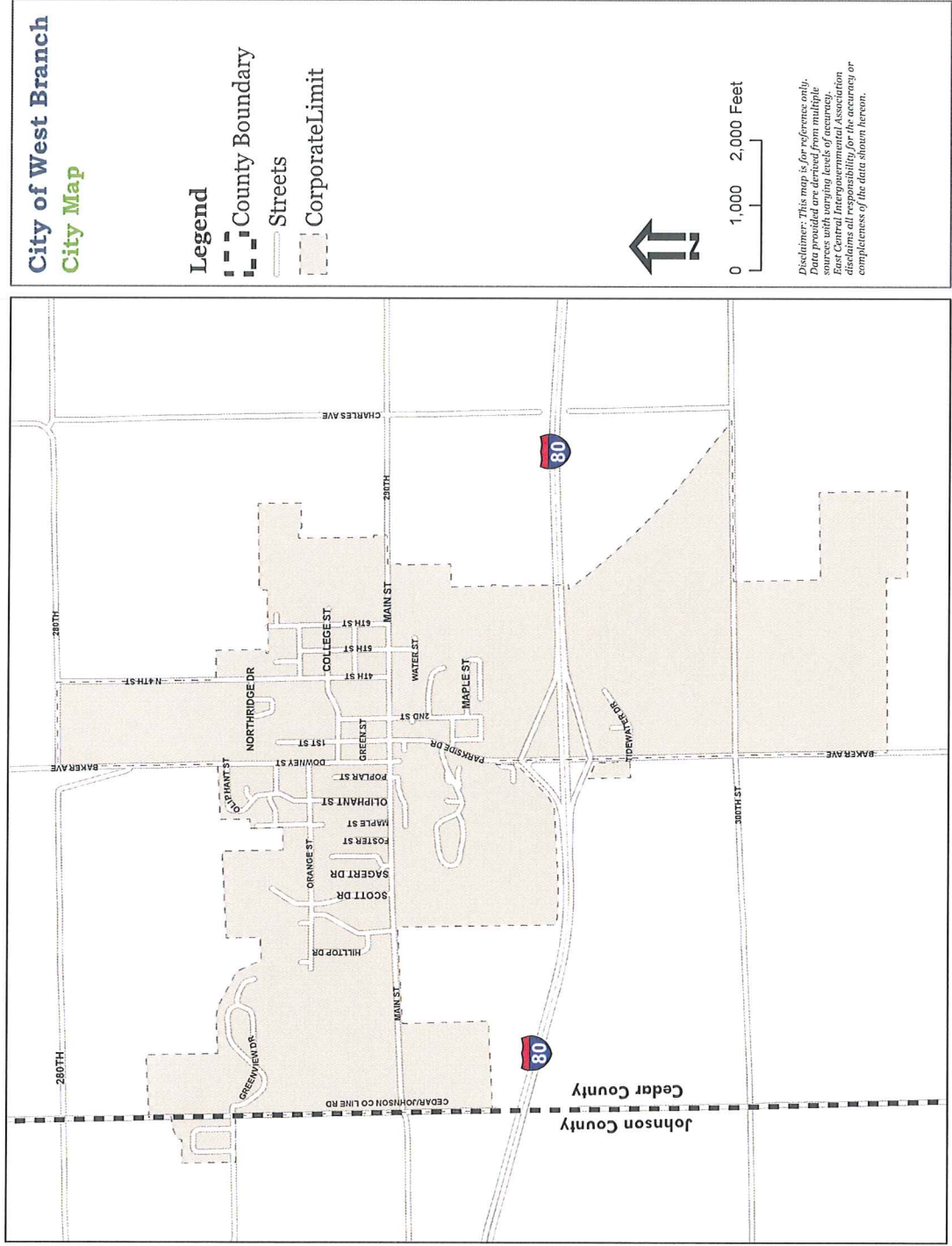
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WEST BRANCH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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WEST BRANCH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Chapter 1: Introduction

The City of West Branch comprehensive plan provides the City a guide for the future. West Branch, with a 2010 census population of 2,322, is located on the western border of Cedar County and eastern border Johnson County in the State of Iowa. The comprehensive plan identifies issues and opportunities in such areas as land use, infrastructure, parks and recreation, economic development, and the use of environmental resources. The comprehensive plan will also provide a road map for implementation to achieve the shared community vision.

Purpose of the Plan

The comprehensive planning process is designed to be a transparent public process in which citizens create a shared vision to promote the health, and prosperity of the community. A comprehensive plan has two fundamental purposes: First, provide a legal basis for land use regulation by analyzing existing conditions and developing growth goals. Second, present a unified and compelling vision for a community and establish the specific actions necessary to fulfill that vision. The recommendations of the plan are designed to take advantage of West Branch's unique location, resources and heritage to build an optimum future for the citizens of West Branch.

Legal Role

Iowa Code 2003: Section 414.4 enables communities to plan. A municipality is empowered to plan future land uses within a 2-mile radius of their actual municipal boundaries. Where multiple municipal jurisdictions overlap, the authority is generally split at the half-way point between the municipal boundaries. However, municipalities often plan to the 2-mile radius limit even if there is an overlap. This is to indicate their desired land use pattern as a basis for boundary agreements, review of plans for unincorporated areas, and the reservation of public sites and open space corridors. If a city chooses to adopt zoning and subdivision ordinances, which recognize that people in a city live cooperatively and have certain responsibilities to coordinate and harmonize the uses of private property, the Iowa Code requires that these ordinances be in conformance with a comprehensive plan and its corresponding vision for the community's physical development. The West Branch Comprehensive Plan provides the legal basis for the city's authority to regulate land use and development.

Community Vision

Comprehensive planning is important because it helps solve and avoid problems, meet the needs of the future, and realize new opportunities for the overall benefit of the entire community. A comprehensive plan helps achieve the community's vision of the future in accord with local priorities and resources. Many of the opportunities of the future may be beyond the current resources of the City or require conditions which do not exist at the time the plan is created. Comprehensive planning provides the basis for shaping the decisions within the City's control and for reacting effectively as changes occur through external factors.

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A complete comprehensive plan will provide the framework for both public and private decision makers to choose end results that are in the best interest of the entire community. The foundation of the plan is based upon principals that make it valid regardless of the exact rate or extent of growth. Comprehensive planning can be vital in determining:

- The quality of life in the community;
- The character, health and accessibility of open space and natural resources;
- The degree to which storm water runoff is controlled from new development;
- The available revenues to support capital improvements and public services;
- The employment, housing, recreational and shopping needs of the community;
- The current and future demands on infrastructure and;
- The compatibility of development, especially that which occurs adjacent to existing or proposed residential land uses.

Public Involvement:

Public involvement is critical to building consensus in the planning process. If the full community is involved in the planning process the comprehensive plan is more likely to be applied. It is unrealistic that all ideas presented in the comprehensive plan will receive complete agreement. However, since the planning process was all inclusive and included a wide range of ideas and opinions, the comprehensive plan becomes the unifying element for decisions.

Public participation was sought through a variety of measures. First, a community wide comprehensive plan informational meeting was held on July 18, 2011. This meeting was designed to inform the planning and zoning commission as well as residents about the purpose and importance of the comprehensive plan. A public input open house was held on October 12, 2011. It was designed so that participants could come and go in hope it would be convenient for participants and more input would be received. A community wide survey was conducted in late March and early April of 2012. Over 400 surveys were received. The survey results are in Appendix A.



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Chapter 2: Vision Statement, Goals & Objectives

Mission Statement: To Maintain and enhance the City of West Branch as a historically significant community with a safe small town, family atmosphere, whose financial and physical resources are managed wisely through policies and programs which assure the long term health and vitality of the community.

The comprehensive plan goals will help guide future development and growth within the planning boundaries of the City of West Branch. These goals and objectives are to be used for guidance for proposed development and redevelopment.

Goals are considered to be a series of guides to consistent and rational public and private decisions used in the development of our urban and rural lands. A goal is an ideal and expresses the purpose that underlies the action. As such, it is expressed in abstract terms and deals with subjective values. It is open to a variety of interpretations and must be interpreted by one's own individual system of values.

Whereas goals are abstract, specific ends must be attained in order to reach these goals. These ends are called Objectives, and unlike goals, can be measured to a certain specificity or standard. The objective is either reached, or it is not; it is a matter of fact, not a matter of opinion. The objectives of the Plan take the form of Policy recommendations.

Economic Development Goals:

Concentrate on retaining and expanding existing local business.

- i. Cooperate with business, educational institutions, community organizations, and government to provide information to local businesses.
- ii. Promote assistance to local firms in finding appropriate development sites for expansion.
- iii. Promote retaining existing manufacturing firms and facilitate their expansion.
- iv. Encourage downtown revitalization and business development.
- v. Encourage diversified retail shopping.

Increase the number of small firms by fostering local entrepreneurship.

- i. Cooperate with other agencies and institutions to identify programs and services to assist in the creation of new small business.
- ii. Support for start-up businesses with both financial and technical assistance.

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Promote vacant, development-ready land for industrial use.

- i. Market development-ready sites.
- ii. Evaluate potential future industrial sites.
- iii. Redevelop existing vacant, underutilized and brownfield properties for industrial development.

Housing Goals:

Promote preservation, rehabilitation and investment in our city housing stock and neighborhoods.

- i. Encourage a range of affordable, accessible, and decent, safe and sanitary rental housing options throughout the city.
- ii. Promote programs to improve energy efficiency and enlist the participation of utility companies in promotional efforts.
- iii. Promote recycling existing, vacant or under-utilized structures, such as schools or industrial building, into housing with an affordable component, where appropriate.

Improve housing opportunities.

- i. Provide for a variety of housing types, costs and locations.
- ii. Become more aggressive in attracting new residents to live in West Branch.

Public Infrastructure and Service Goals:

Provide, maintain, and improve solid waste collection and disposal infrastructure and services.

- i. Maintain efficient and effectiveness of solid waste collection system.
- ii. Strive to establish yard waste collection.

Provide, maintain, and improve a cost-effective, safe and functional surface transportation system.

- i. Support ongoing street reconstruction, rehabilitation, and maintenance overlay programs, ensuring the timely maintenance, repair and reconstruction of the city's streets and bridges.
- ii. Seek alternative funding sources for construction and maintenance.
- iii. Support extending the life and improve the quality of the city street system through preventative maintenance programs.
- iv. Coordinate with the state, counties, and other cities for surface transportation system improvements and maintenance.

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Provide, maintain and improve a safe and functional storm sewer system.

- i. Support maintaining the integrity of the storm sewer system.
- ii. Strive to meet all local, state and federal regulations.
- iii. Identify existing and potential flood prone problem areas, and alleviate with appropriate mitigation strategies, where possible.

Provide, maintain and improve cost-effective, functional and self-supporting sanitary sewer and water pollution control systems.

- i. Support maintaining the integrity of the sanitary sewer system.
- ii. Encourage efficient operation of the Water Pollution Control Plan and sanitary sewer system.
- iii. Strive to meet all local, state and federal water quality standards.

Provide, maintain and improve a cost-effective, functional and self-supporting water system.

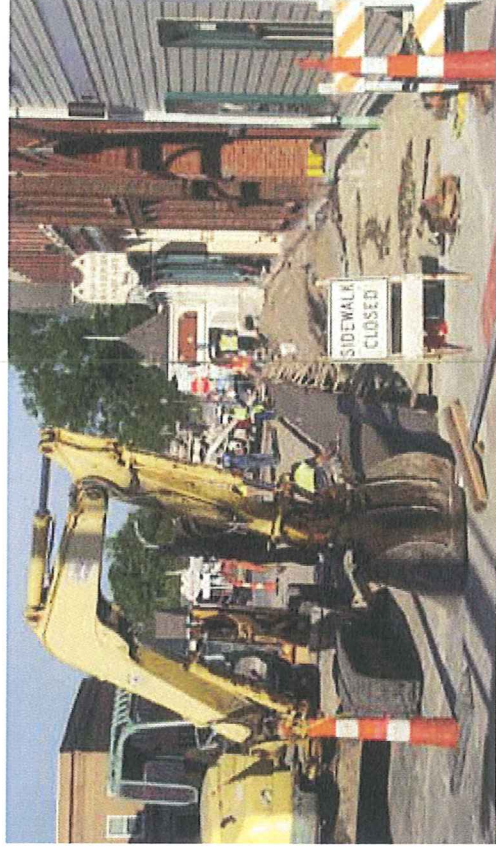
- i. Support maintaining the integrity of the water system.
- ii. Encourage efficient operation of the water system.
- iii. Strive to meet all local, state and federal water quality standards.
- iv. Strive to improve the taste of water.
- v. Strive to maintain a reasonable level of hardness of the water.

Provide, maintain and improve safe and efficient movement on the City's street system.

- i. Support the continuing street construction program, providing for timely maintenance, repair and reconstruction of streets.
- ii. Encourage the implementation of safe principles and practices
- iii. Support maintaining the streets system's continuity and safety.

Promote cost-effective emergency services and facilities that enhance and protect the lives of residents

- i. Promote cooperation and coordination among emergency services agencies
- ii. Support provisions of responsive, high quality emergency services



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- iii. Encourage private-public partnerships where possible

Provide public facilities and services at levels which support a “desirable quality of life” for current and future residents.

- i. Provide facilities and services in locations compatible with planned uses, populations and needs.
- ii. Encourage new development to locate where existing infrastructure is already in place.

Promote the creation and adoption of a complete streets policy.

Administration Goals:

Promote the fiscal soundness and viability of City government operations.

- Consider using nonrecurring revenues only to fund nonrecurring expenditures.
- Monitor changing conditions, trends and legislation appropriate to the City’s fiscal position and promote the City’s sound fiscal condition.
- Identify and evaluate revenue alternatives to the City property tax.
- Minimize program costs by using sound purchasing practices.
- Maintain adequate reserves to positively impact the City bond rating and provide flexibility to implement projects as opportunities occur.
- Use City Council goals and priorities to guide the budgeting process.

Operate municipal facilities and services in an accountable manner and encourage positive public relations with residents and others.

- i. Maintain and review administrative, management and personnel capacity for effective support and implementation of municipal services.
- ii. Pursue a variety of revenue sources to offset flat-line budgets as well as examine ways to reduce costs and increase fund balances for municipal facilities and services.

Provide adequately developed park areas and continue to develop a pedestrian/bicycle trail system that links the parks, historical, and natural resources of the City while providing opportunities for recreational activities.

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Library Building Project Goals:

Determine future location of the library

- i. Work with FEH Associates and George Lawson Consulting to evaluate sites in West Branch and surrounding area.
- ii. Select site and acquire the property

Achieve funding for library renovation or construction

- i. Work with FEH Associates to construct designs for future library
- ii. Promote library project among local social groups and community
- iii. Work with the Friends of the Library to conduct fundraising events.
- iv. Acquire grants and donations for building construction.
- v. Hire a professional fundraiser to assist in fundraising efforts (if needed).
- vi. Work to successfully pass a bond referendum (if needed).

Carry out renovation or construction

- i. Work with FEH Associates to create site construction plans
- ii. Conduct bidding process to select the building contractor.
- iii. Hire contractor to conduct the library renovation or construction
- iv. Work with FEH Associates and selected contractors to conduct the building renovation



Land Use and Zoning Goals:

Encourage redevelopment opportunities to revitalize unused property.

- i. Encourage redevelopment or adaptive reuse of vacant or underutilized buildings and sites
- ii. Promote infill development
- iii. Promote affordable commercial space for small start-up, new or growing businesses
- iv. Encourage reinvestment in our existing neighborhoods (i.e., smart growth)
- v. Consider incentives for smart growth

Encourage cooperative effort between the City of West Branch, Cedar County, Johnson County and any other bodies or agencies involved with the planning, administration or enforcement of plans, codes, ordinances, regulations, etc., that are in effect in the West Branch area.

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Chapter 3: Smart Planning

The “Iowa Smart Planning Act” was signed into law in the spring of 2010, as a way to guide and encourage the development of local comprehensive plans. The bill articulates 10 Smart Planning Principles and 13 comprehensive plan elements for application in local comprehensive plan development and public decision making. These guidelines are intended to improve economic opportunities, preserve the natural environment, protect quality of life and ensure equitable decision-making processes.

The 10 Smart Planning Principles are as follows:

- **Collaboration:**
The comprehensive plan should have a proactive strategy to gain public participation from governmental, community and individual stakeholders, including those outside the jurisdiction in planning, zoning, development and, resource management deliberations, decision making and implementation processes.
- **Efficiency, Transparency and Consistency:**
The comprehensive planning process should be transparent. The decision making process should follow clearly defined standards, be consistent and documented.
- **Clean, Renewable and Efficient Energy:**
Efforts to incorporate clean, renewable and efficient principals into design standards, ordinances and policies should be looked at and addressed in the comprehensive plan.
- **Occupational Diversity:**
Planning, zoning and development should promote increased diversity of employment, business opportunities, access to education and training, expanded entrepreneurial opportunities.
- **Revitalization:**
Facilitate the redevelopment and or reuse of established town centers and neighborhoods by promoting development that conserves land, protects historic resources, promotes pedestrian accessibility and integrated mixed uses of properties. Redevelopment and reuse of existing sites, structures and infrastructure is preferred over new construction in under developed areas.

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- **Housing Diversity:**
Promote a multitude of housing types, styles, and price ranges. Look at areas where rehabilitation might be a good fit and identify new housing developments close to existing transportation and employment centers.
- **Community Character:**
Identify the characteristics that make the city what it is. Then develop a strategy to promote activities and development that are consistent with the character and architectural style of the community.

- **Natural Resources & Agricultural Protection:**

Emphasize the protection, preservation and restoration of natural resources, agricultural land, cultural and historic landscapes while also looking to increase the availability of open spaces.

- **Sustainable Design:**

Promote developments, buildings and infrastructure that utilize green design and construction practices with the goal of conserving natural resources by reducing waste and pollution through efficient use of land, water, air, and energy.

- **Transportation Diversity:**

Promote expanded transportation options for residents of the community. Consideration should be given to transportation options and development that maximize mobility, reduce congestion, conserve fuel and improve air quality.



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The 13 Comprehensive Planning Elements are as follows:

- Public Participation:
- Issues and Opportunities
- Land Use
- Housing
- Public Infrastructure and Utilities
- Transportation
- Economic Development
- Agricultural and Natural Resources
- Community Facilities
- Community Character:
- Hazards
- Intergovernmental Collaboration
- Implementation

Currently there is no state funding for the creation of comprehensive plans or comprehensive plan updates for cities or counties to incorporate the ten smart planning principals or the thirteen comprehensive planning elements.



Chapter 4: Community Profile/Character

Community Profile

To understand where the future of the City is heading, it is good to examine its past. A community profile includes information on the demographic information which includes: total population, gender, race, ancestry, age, employment, income, economy, education, housing and natural/cultural resources. The data presented should provide an overall picture of the community. This data is meant to provide a resource for City officials and the public in the creation of policy, implementation of capital improvement projects, and making of business decisions.

Much of the data for this chapter comes from the 2010 Census, Iowa Workforce Development, and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and from Iowa State University Extension. To show relevance and significance of the data presented, comparisons are made between the City of West Branch and other areas including, Cedar County, and other communities that are geographically and similarly comparable to the City of West Branch.

Peer City Reasoning

Comparing the City of West Branch to the peer cities identified in the Iowa State University Retail Sales Analysis and Report for West Branch, Iowa Fiscal Year 2011 can help identify the City's strengths and weaknesses relative to its peer cities. The cities used in the Retail Sales Analysis as peer cities are the cities of Brooklyn, Donnellson, Edgewood, Elgin, Elkader, Lansing, Montezuma, Moravia, Sully, and Ventura.

Population History and Characteristics

Examination of the population history reveals important changes in the personality and characteristics of West Branch. Table 1.1 summarizes the historical population change in West Branch. Table 1.2 includes a comparison with the cities of Brooklyn, Donnellson, Edgewood, Elgin, Elkader, Lansing, Montezuma, Moravia, Sully, and Ventura. Tables 1.1 and 1.2 indicate the following trends:

- West Branch population grew consistently from 1940 -2010
- Population increased 5.77% from 2000 to 2010

Table 1.1 Historic Population Change in West Branch, 1880-2010			
Year	Population	Decade	Percent Change between Decade
1880	501		
1890	474	1880-1890	-5.70%
1900	647	1890-1900	26.74%
1910	643	1900-1910	-0.62%
1920	688	1910-1920	6.54%
1930	652	1920-1930	-5.52%

1940	719	1930-1940	9.32%
1950	769	1940-1950	6.50%
1960	1,053	1950-1960	26.97%
1970	1,322	1960-1970	20.35%
1980	1,867	1970-1980	29.19%
1990	1,908	1980-1990	2.15%
2000	2,188	1990-2000	12.80%
2010	2,322	2000-2010	5.77%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 1.2 Population Change for West Branch and Peer Cities, 1960-2010						
	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
West Branch	1,053	1,322	1,867	1,908	2,188	2,322
Brooklyn	1,415	1,410	1,509	1,439	1,367	1,468
Donnellson	709	798	972	940	963	912
Edgewood	767	786	900	842	923	864
Elgin	644	613	702	637	676	683
Elkader	1,526	1,592	1,688	1,510	1,465	1,273
Lansing	1,325	1,227	1,181	1,007	1,012	999
Montezuma	1,416	1,353	1,485	1,651	1,440	1,462
Moravia	621	699	706	679	713	665
Sully	508	685	828	841	904	821
Ventura	-	543	614	590	670	717

Source: U.S. Census

Population Projections

Population projections can help West Branch plan efficiently for future land use and community service needs. These projections are formed by first evaluating West Branch's historic trends in population and then projecting these trends out toward the future. The methods implemented to predict the future population of West Branch are:

1. Trend line analysis
2. Relative proportion

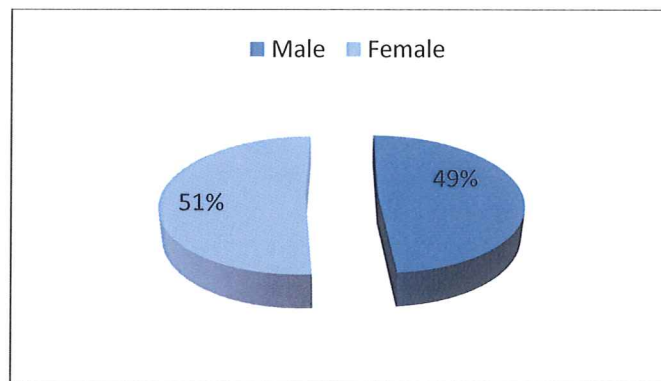
The trend line analysis method utilizes the community's historic census population figures to calculate a "best fit" trend line of past growth. Once the trend line is developed, it is then extended to show projected future growth. This method assumes that West Branch's growth rate will continue at a rate similar to the past.

The relative proportion method assumes that the total population of a municipality can be projected based on the total population of its surrounding county. By using Woods and Poole population projections for Cedar County a ratio of West Branch's Population to Cedar County's population can be established. The table below shows the results for the City of West Branch from the two methods.

Table 1.3 Population Project West Branch, 2020-2040			
	2020	2030	2040
Trend Line Analysis	2227	2374	2521
Relative Proportion	2370	2422	2469

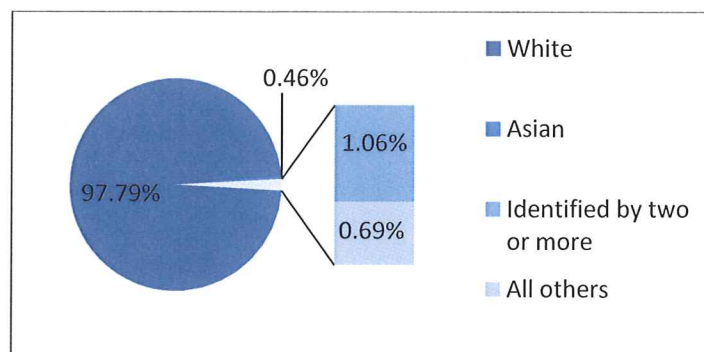
Gender

As of the 2010 Census, West Branch's population was 49% male and 51% female. These numbers are consistent with the majority of U.S. cities. Cedar County shows a similar division of male and female population with 49% male and 51% females according to the 2010 Census.



Race, Ancestry, Ethnicity, Age & Gender

Census data can show diversity within a population that is not always perceptible to the general public. The latest U.S. Census figures show West Branch's population to be fairly homogenous in terms of race with 96.99% of the population identified as white. The highest racial minority are persons of two or more races or 1.29% of the population followed by African American at 0.43% of the population. Cedar County's racial diversity is similarly situated to West Branch in that 97.79% of the population identified as white, two or more races was 1.06% followed by Asian at 0.46%.



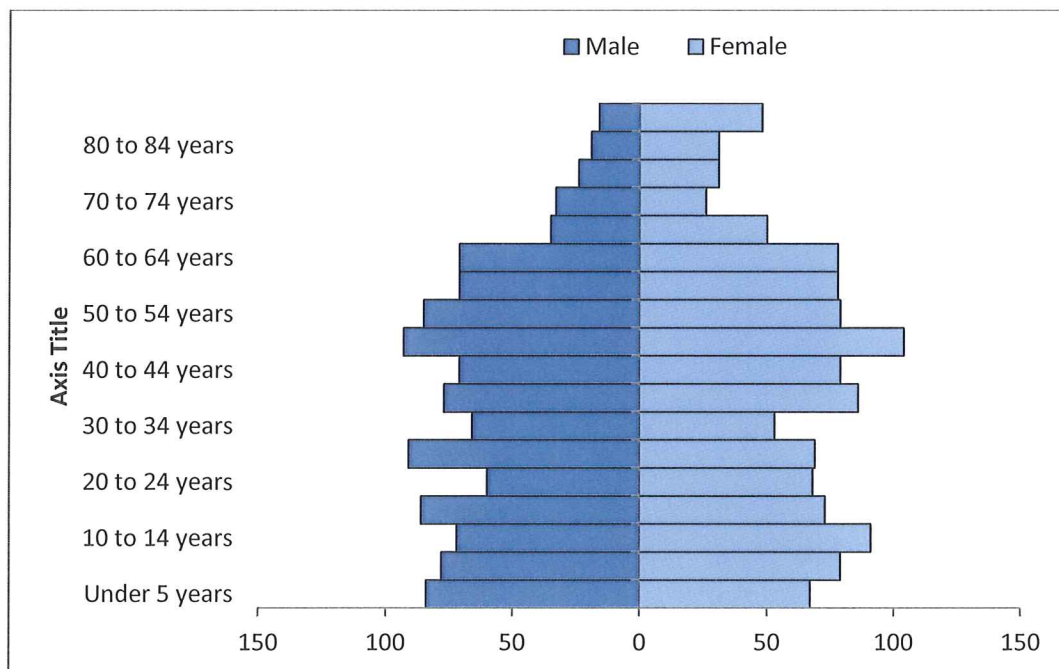
Ethnicity

Respondents to the decennial census can indicate if they have Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. Persons identifying themselves as Hispanic or Latino can be of any race or ancestry. West Branch has a Hispanic/Latino population of 49 or 0.2% of the total population.

Age & Gender

The best evaluation of the population's overall age is the median age. The U.S. Census Bureau defines median age as the "measure that divides the age distribution in a stated area into two equal parts: one-half of the population falling below the median value and one-half above the median value." The higher the median age the older a population, and conversely, the lower the median age the younger the population. The U.S. Census Bureau data shows that the median age for West Branch has been steadily increasing from 29.0 in 1980 to 38.7 in 2010. Cedar County's median has also been steadily increasing from 31.9 in 1980 to 42.4 in 2010.

The population figures provide an illustration of the age distribution within the City. On graphs of this type, younger communities will be wider at the base and narrower at the top. The opposite is true for older communities.



Economy

The Retail Sales Analysis & Report for West Branch, Iowa Fiscal Year 2011 created by Iowa State University Department of Economics provides an extensive look at the retail activity occurring within West Branch. In fiscal year 2011 West Branch generated \$13,074,548 in real taxable sales. In comparison the ten peer cities range from \$7,769,448 to \$30,801,767 in real taxable sales for fiscal year 2011.

A pull factor is a measure that describes how well a community is servicing its population in terms of retail trade or the ability to attract business from beyond its borders. A pull factor of 1 indicates a community is servicing 100% of its population's retail needs. A pull factor greater than 1 indicates that customers are being drawn from beyond the community's borders. The 2011 pull factor according to the Retail Sales Analysis & Report for West Branch, Iowa Fiscal Year 2011 is 0.53. In comparison Cedar County has a pull factor of 0.46.

The table below shows how West Branch compares to the peer cities identified in the Retail Sales Analysis & Report.

2011 Retail Sales Analysis Table		
City	Taxable Retail Sales Per Capita	Pull Factor
Brooklyn	\$18,508	1.78
Donnellson	\$12,708	1.26
Edgewood	\$17,057	1.73
Elgin	\$11,392	1.19
Elkader	\$24,368	2.32
Lansing	\$11,860	1.21
Montezuma	\$12,911	1.25
Moravia	\$13,298	1.42
Sully	\$20,573	1.98
Ventura	\$16,245	1.48
West Branch	\$5,599	0.53

Chapter 5: Land Use

The Canadian Institute of Planners defines land use planning as the “means the scientific, aesthetic, and orderly disposition of land, resources, facilities and services with a view to securing the physical, economic and social efficiency, health and well-being of urban and rural communities.” In other words, land use describes how and why the land is being used for a particular purpose. Existing land uses are those in place at the time the information was recorded or surveyed. Future land use addresses the desired use for land within the planning period and planning boundary. The West Branch Comprehensive Plan planning period is 20 years with a planning boundary of roughly 2 miles from the existing corporate limits.

The land use chapter provides the framework and statement of land use policy. The future land use map, presented in this chapter provides guidance to local officials on the quality and character of the development that may take place within the next 20 years.

There are five types of land uses identified in the comprehensive plan. They are residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, and governmental. Residential land use is land that has a home or dwelling on it for the purpose of human habitation. Commercial land use is land used for wholesale/retail sales, office use, which relates to professional services and business activities. Industrial facilities include manufacturing, warehousing, wholesale trade, construction and utilities. Institutional land use is defined as land dedicated for government buildings, schools, and cemeteries. Parks and recreation is land dedicated to parks and recreational facilities such a multi-use trails. An agricultural land use is land used for agricultural production either crop or livestock production or land that has been left as open space.

To plan what types of land use West Branch will need in the next 20 years it is important to understand what the existing conditions are. Map 5.1 shows the existing land use in West Branch. Table 5.1 provides a detailed breakdown of the existing land use by acres in the incorporated areas of the City of West Branch.

Table 5.1

Land Use Type	Total Acres	Percentage
Residential	358	28.9%
Commercial	313	25.3%
Industrial	90	7.3%
Institutional	212	17.1%
Agricultural	219	17.7%
Park and Recreation	45	3.6%

Future Land Use

Providing a map of the anticipated future growth areas and expected future land uses allows for preferred future growth patterns to occur. This provides a guide for where development activities should occur to maximize the city’s resources. Map 5.2 is the Future Land Use Map for

the City of West Branch display's the city's preferred future growth patterns and future land uses. In preparing for the future it is essential to identify ways to encourage, attract and/or retain residential. Ways to encourage long-term residents are:

- Retain and encourage locally owned businesses
- Encourage home ownership
- Provide a variety of housing options
- Offer quality of like amenities; such as multi-use trails

Table 5.2 provides a detailed breakdown of the future land use needs for the City of West Branch.

Land Use Type	Total Acres	Percentage
Residential	473	0.8%
Commercial	363	0.1%
Industrial	90	0.3%
Institutional	212	0.1%
Agricultural & Open Space	53	97%
Parks and Recreation	45	3.6%

Land Use Goals

The land use goals of the City of West Branch are meant to provide continuity on how land use matters are addressed over the next 20 years in the City of West Branch. It is a means to protect identified valuable resources and preserve what truly makes the City of West Branch a great place to live, work and play. The City should look into ways to incentivizes redevelopment within the City of West Branch. For example a housing rehabilitation program should be considered.

Other Items for Consideration

The public input survey found that the land use type that respondents thought the City of West Branch needed more of was commercial uses (shopping, services, food/beverage establishments, and offices). Natural Areas, open space and wildlife habitat was found to be about right while condominium residences respondents thought there was too much of. Another area that survey respondents thought the City of West Branch needed more was civic spaces (parks, pedestrian plazas, outdoor entertainment).

City of West Branch Existing Land Use

West Branch Land Use

- Agricultural/Open Space
- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Park/Recreation/Conservation

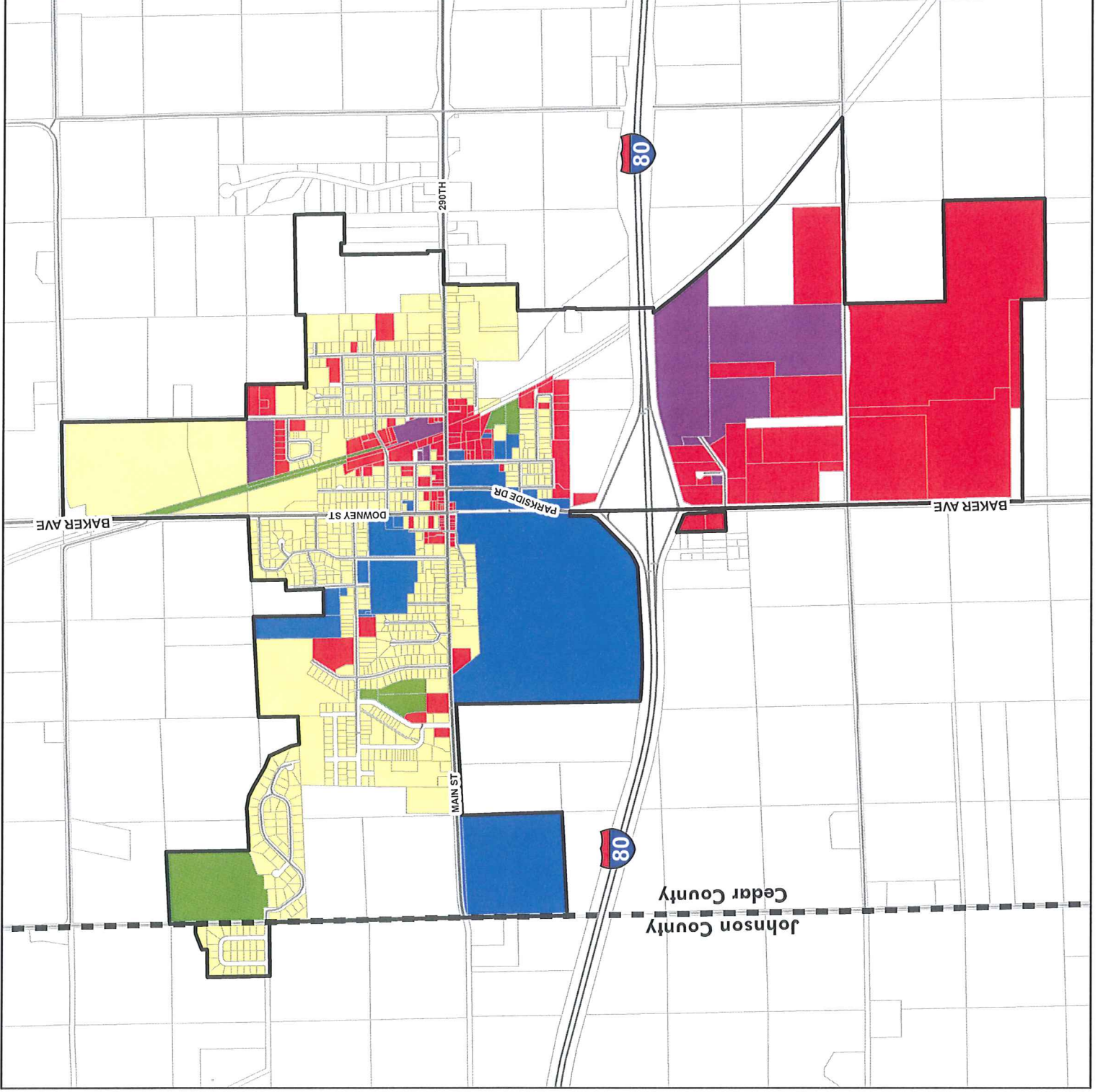
Map prepared by ECIA, November 2012

Parcel Data Source: Cedar County GIS, 2012
Johnson County GIS, 2012



0 1,000 2,000 Feet

Disclaimer: This map is for reference only. Data provided are derived from multiple sources with varying levels of accuracy. East Central Intergovernmental Association disclaims all responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of the data shown hereon.



City of West Branch Future Land Use

West Branch Land Use

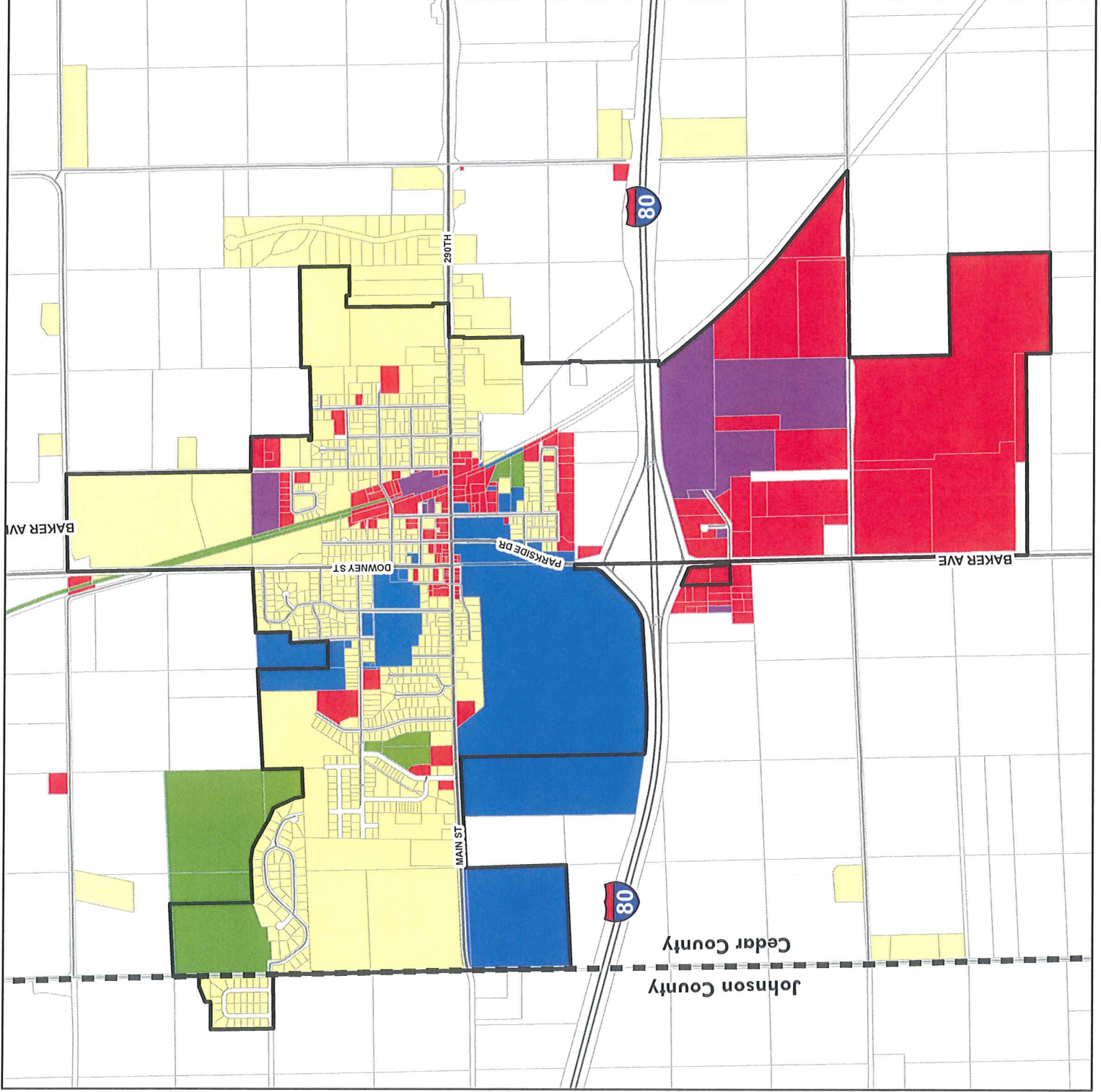
- Agricultural/Open Space
- Residential
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- Institutional
- Park/Recreation/Conservation

Map prepared by ECIA, November 2012
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Chapter 7: Economic Development

Economic Development involves every facet of the community, from parks and trails, to technology infrastructure, to strong leadership. West Branch must attend to all these facets in order to support existing businesses, maintain a quality workforce, and foster new economic ventures. Other chapters of this plan outline strategies for preserving natural resources, maintaining a diverse transportation network, providing quality recreational opportunities and public facilities, supporting a reliable infrastructure system, revitalizing existing neighborhoods, and developing land efficiently, profitably, and responsibly. All of these pieces fit together to form a strategy that will support a vibrant, enduring economy. These strategies contribute to the declared economic development goals of West Branch, which are outlined below.

CURRENT CONDITION

Residents of West Branch are fairly satisfied with the current appearance of their community, specifically with the downtown business district. Resident's opinions about the appearance of West Branch were gathered in a survey. Of the 401 surveys submitted, 84% (336) of respondents lived in West Branch while 65 respondents or 16% did not. The survey revealed that 64% of those surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that the City's appearance through tree

plantings, flowers and landscaping is adequate. Survey respondents were also satisfied with the City's signage and Main Street facades (68%). The Design Committee as part of West Branch Main Street program strives to improve the physical appearance of the downtown district. The committee works on attractive window displays, parking areas, building improvements, street furniture, signs, sidewalks, street lights, and landscaping. This work, along with other community efforts has resulted in a pleasant community appearance. Seventy-four percent of survey respondents reported that the City's efforts to preserve and enhance historic buildings are also thought to be adequate. This can partially be attributed to the National Historic District formed by the downtown buildings. Lastly, just under half (49%) of individuals responding to the survey reported that the City's building and zoning codes adequately maintain the character of the community.



WEST BRANCH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

WEST BRANCH'S ECONOMIC GOALS

The economic development goals of West Branch were developed from the various public input methods. These goals are meant to foster economic growth through expansion of existing business and new economic partnerships.

Concentrate on retaining and expanding existing local business.

In tough economic times, retaining existing business becomes even more critical. Existing business retention and expansion is a crucial component in an overall economic development plan. National economic development studies have shown that 60-80% of future job growth results from the expansion of existing industries. While business retention and expansion may not be as glamorous as business attraction, it is a critical piece. The Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) believes that business retention and expansion programs are best performed as a locally driven effort. West Branch has adopted the following goals to ensure the continued success of existing businesses:

Partnerships

Cooperate with business, educational institutions, community organizations, and government to provide information to local businesses.
Development Sites
Promote assistance to local firms in finding appropriate development sites for expansion.

Facilitation

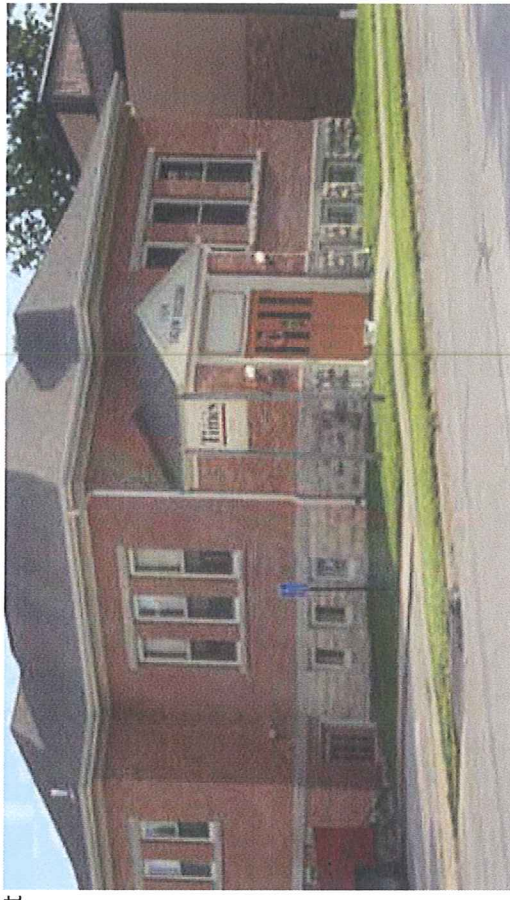
Promote retaining existing manufacturing firms and facilitate their expansion.

Revitalization

Encourage downtown revitalization and business development.

Diversification

Encourage diversified retail shopping.



WEST BRANCH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Increase the number of small firms by fostering local entrepreneurship.

Locally grown, small firms have enormous growth potential. The Small Business Administration reports that small businesses represent 99.7% of all employers and provide approximately 75% of the net new jobs added to the economy. Growing local entrepreneurship will lead to homegrown small businesses in West Branch. Companies started by local entrepreneurs bring new wealth and economic growth to a community. Local entrepreneurs are also likely to remain, grow, and invest in the home community, thus cultivating businesses that are invested in the community. West Branch has adopted the following goals to ensure the continued success of existing business:

Partnerships

Cooperate with other agencies and institutions to identify programs and services to assist in the creation of new small business.

Financial and Technical Assistance

Promote support for start-up businesses with both financial and technical assistance.

ECONOMIC STRATEGY

Vibrant and Active Downtown Area

A vibrant and active downtown area is important to West Branch residents. Of the 401 survey respondents, 83% or 326 individuals reported that a vibrant downtown was very important or important. People want to be where they can live, work, and play. Fostering a vibrant and active downtown will require the continued success and expansion of local businesses, a multi-modal transportation system, and partnerships with area civic groups. Providing social activities in addition to ensuring the success of retail businesses will be important in coming years.

Incentives for Small Businesses

The Great Recession has had a significant effect on small businesses, specifically in terms of financing. Banks are making fewer loans to businesses and the loan amounts are also decreasing. According to the Small Business Administration, from 2007 to 2011 the number of loans to commercial and industrial small businesses fell 10% and the total dollars lent to this group declined by 13%. This further demonstrates the need for incentives and loan programs targeted at small businesses. Eighty-three percent of West Branch survey respondents reported that incentives for small businesses to improve their buildings and properties are very important or important. Currently, West Branch Main Street offers a revolving loan fund with 0% interest for loans amounting between \$500 and \$2000. Additional incentive and loan programs are available through the Small Business Association and other state and federal programs. Additional research should be conducted to determine if additional gap financing or incentives are needed to assist businesses in West Branch.

WEST BRANCH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Sustainable or “Green” Community

Sustainability is defined by the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Long lasting sustainability requires a balance between the environment, social equity, and economic development. Sustainability or a “green” community was identified as very important or important to 71% of West Branch survey respondents. There are a number of tools West Branch can utilize to cultivate a culture of sustainability among West Branch residents and the business community. Planning is the first step towards a more sustainable community. ICLEI offers a number of tools for members including a Sustainability Planning Toolkit. East Central Inter-governmental Association also coordinates the Petal Project green business certification program. The program offers businesses a simple framework for saving money and resources while establishing a community-wide definition of a green business. Utilizing these programs and others can guide the West Branch sustainability plan.

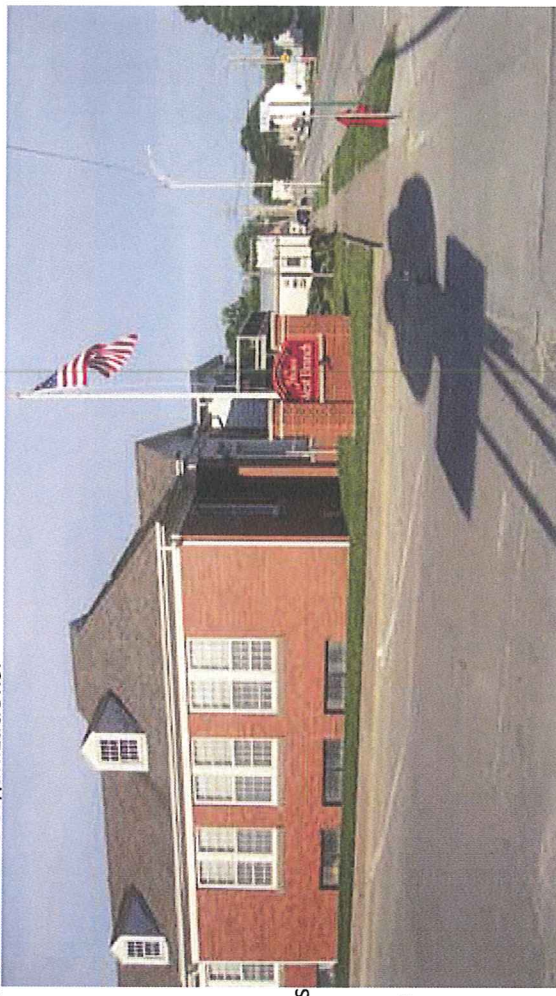
Diverse Shopping

A vibrant and active downtown area requires diverse shopping options. Sixty-one percent of West Branch survey respondents identified diverse shopping opportunities as very important or important. Attracting or growing from within diverse businesses will require the continued development of all of the goals listed above in addition to the availability of infrastructure. Recruiting and retaining these businesses will require constant communication with potential leads and existing business, access to incentives and financing, a vibrant downtown and citizens with a “buy local” mindset. Meeting this goal will require collaboration amongst business leaders, government officials, and other civic organizations.

Other:

Hoover Complex

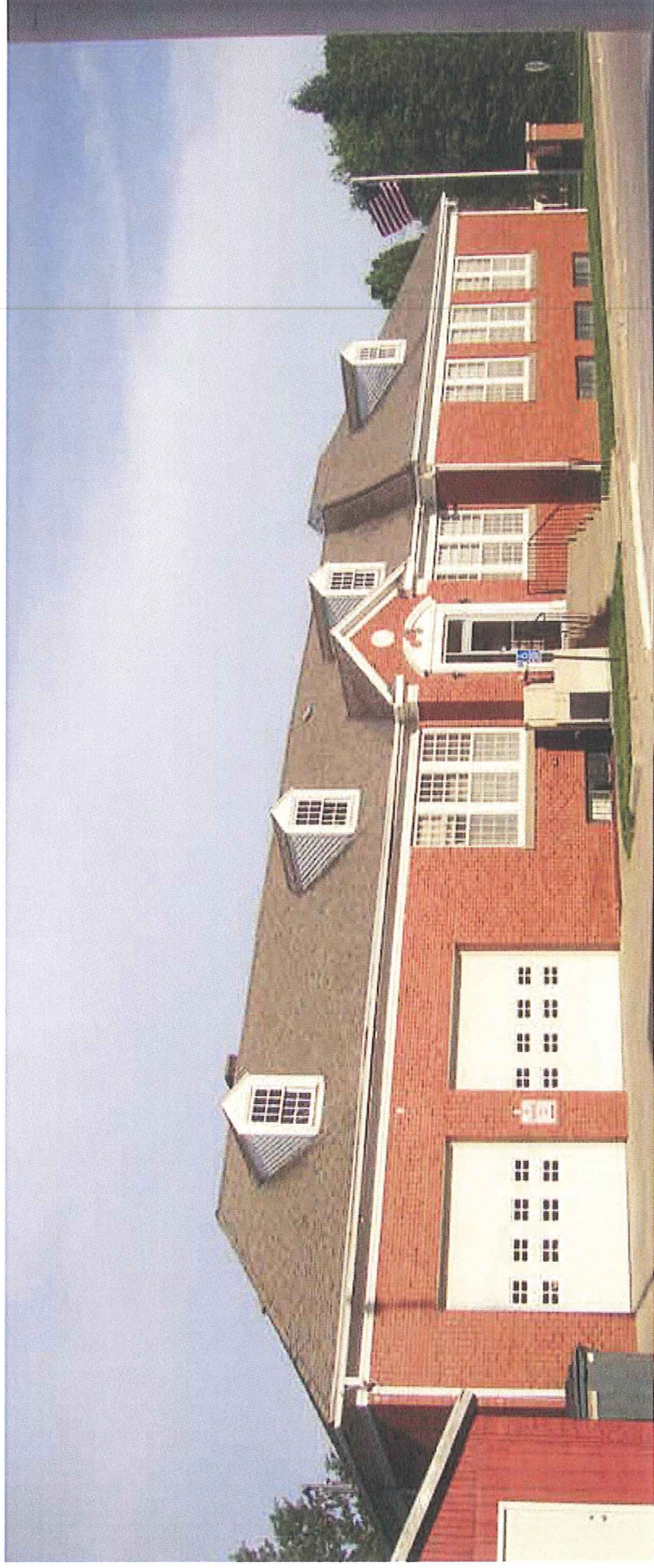
Tourism is an area of economic development that the City of West Branch should capitalize on. West Branch is the birthplace of the 31st President of the United States, Herbert Hoover. West Branch is home to the Herbert Hoover National Historic Site and Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Museum. The Herbert Hoover National Historic Site tells the story of the 31st President by preserving historic buildings and landscape that commemorates his life and accomplishments. The Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Museum visitors can learn about Herbert Hoover’s life and career through exhibits. The library museum has had nearly three million visitors since it opened over forty-years ago. That is approximately 75,000 visitors each year.



WEST BRANCH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Iowa City Area Development Group

The Iowa City Area Development Group (ICAD) works to the quality of its communities by serving businesses and economic development needs in the cities of Iowa City, Coralville, North Liberty, Solon, Tiffin, Tipton, the Amana Colonies, West Branch, Kalona, West Liberty and Johnson County. ICAD is an economic development resource to the City of West Branch. ICAD's purpose is to create, collaborate and lead regional economic development that will result in the creation and growth of companies, quality jobs and wealth.



Chapter 8: Public Infrastructure and Utilities

This section provides an inventory and analysis of West Branch's infrastructure system, including water distribution and storage, sanitary sewer collection and treatment and storm water conveyance. Considerations for the growth of these systems are also covered.

Inventory and Analysis

Water System

The City of West Branch has 4 Silurian wells. Wells 1 and 2 have a capacity of 300 GPM each and Wells 3 and 4 and a capacity of 100 GPM each. However the total pumping capacity with all wells in operation is only 800 GPM. The City currently has aeration/detention tank that has a capacity of 500 GPM. The water system currently has three high service pumps. Only two of the three high service pumps run at one time, the other pump serves as back up. The treatment facility uses pressure filtration to remove iron. The treatment facility plant has two 8-foot diameter vertical pressure filters rated at 100 GPM each and one three cell horizontal pressure filter rated at 300 GPM.

Sanitary Sewer System

The City of West Branch sanitary sewer system is made up of a collection system, one sewage lift station located on the southeast part of the City and an aerated lagoon. The collection system consists of sanitary sewer pipe, manholes and sewer mains.

Storm water

Storm water is water (rain, melted snow, melted ice) collected at it "runs off" impervious surfaces, including buildings, roads, parking lots and fields. In the undeveloped portions of the City of West Branch, storm water naturally flows across the ground and is either absorbed by the ground or runs into creeks and streams. In the developed areas of the City, storm water is channeled across roofs, gutters, parking lots and streets: through pipes into local streams and creeks. Storm water management revolves around three main issues: drainage, water quality and flooding.

Private Utility Service Providers

Table 8.1 Service Provider by Service	
Service	Service Provider
Electric	Alliant Energy & Linn County Rural Electric Cooperative (Greenview and Brickford Drives)
Gas	Alliant Energy
Phone	Liberty Communications
Cable	Liberty Communications and Mediacom
Garbage and Recycling	Johnson County Refuse

Alliant Energy Cooperation is an energy holding company providing electric and natural gas services to communities throughout Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota. Service is provided to more than 1.4 million customers and nearly 4,000 people are employed by Alliant Energy.

Linn County Rural Electric Cooperative organized on July 8, 1938 as a private, non-profit electric utility that is owned by the members it serves. It was established to provide electric service at the lowest price possible. Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative is headquartered in Marion, Iowa and membership covers homes, farms, and businesses in Linn, Johnson, Jones, Cedar and Benton Counties.

Liberty Communications is a local communications company that provides cable, telephone and internet service. Liberty Communications began as the West Liberty Telephone Company in 1899. In January of 1997 the name was changed to Liberty Communications. Liberty Communications serves the Cities of West Branch and West Liberty.

Mediacom Communications is the nation's eighth largest cable television company. Mediacom's focus is providing cable, internet and phone service to America's smaller cities and towns. They serve over 1,500 communities nationwide and have a workforce over 4,400.

Johnson County Refuse provides garbage and recycling pickup every Friday in the City of West Branch. Johnson County Refuse is locally owned and operated and serves all of Johnson County and surrounding areas. Garbage that cannot be recycled must be placed in garbage bags or cans with a \$1.25 yellow sticker attached. Year round stickers can also be purchased. Curbside recycling is mandatory and a monthly \$4.75 fee is included on the monthly water and sewer bill. Each resident is provided with a green and red recycling bin.

Future Needs

Table 8.2 Future Utility System Needs		
Utility System	Need	Cost inflated to 2012 dollars
Water	New Jordan Well	\$984,450
Water	Aeration/Detention Tank Improvements	\$142,382
Water	Vertical Pressure Filters	\$398,666
Water	300,000 gallon Elevated Storage Tank	\$1,016,171
Water	12" Water Main Looping	\$788,365
Sanitary Sewer	System Rehabilitation Phase 1	\$538,805
Sanitary Sewer	New Lift Station & Force Main	\$750,000

The City of West Branch has been proactive in evaluating the future needs of its water and sanitary sewer systems. For a more detailed analysis of each systems future needs please view the West Branch, Iowa Water System Analysis Final Report November 6, 2002 and the Report on Sanitary Sewer Collection System Investigation – Study Area 1 City of West Branch, Iowa February, 2012.